

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 295104

BONN FOR HABIB; BELGRADE FOR CSCE DELEGATION

FOLLOWING REPEAT BUCHAREST 8444, SENT SECSTATE MUNICH BELGRADE
BERLIN BUDAPEST MOSCOW PRAGUE SOFIA WARSAW 18 NOV:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 8444

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SOPH, XH, RO, US

SUBJ: EVALUATION OF RFE BROADCASTS TO ROMANIA

REFS: A) STATE 51717; B) BUCHAREST 2929

1. SUMMARY: THE ROMANIAN SERVICE CONTINUES TO PROVIDE
INFORMATIVE, VARIED AND RESPONSIBLE NEWS COVERAGE OF WORLD
AFFAIRS AND MUCH INTERESTING AND STIMULATING CROSS-
REPORTING. THROUGH OS SUCCESS IN BUILDING A MASS LISTENER-
SHIP THE ROMANIAN SERVICE HAS WON ITSELF THE ROLE OF "LYAL
OPPOSITION" IN ROMANIA. WE BELIEVE THAT THE STATION MAY
WISH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS UNIQUE POSITION IN ROMANIAN
POLITICAL LIFE AND CONSIDER NEW WAYS OF DEEPENING ITS IMPACT
AND USING ITS TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE TO MOVE THE COUNTRY IN
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NEW AND HEALTHIER DIRECTIONS. SPECIFICALLY, IT OCCURS TO US
THAT THROUGH IDENTIFYING AND TARGETING THE SPECIFIC GROUPS
THAT ARE BEST SITUATED TO RESPOND TO ENCOURAGEMENT TO WORK
FOR CHANGES IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM, RFE COULD MOVE ROMANIA,
UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES, IN WAYS THAT WOULD BENEFIT
THE POPULACE AS A WHOLE. RFE IS THE BEST JUDGE OF THE MOST
EFFECTIVE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM; OUR SUGGESTIONS ARE
NO MORE THAN JUST THAT. END SUMMARY.

2. ROMANIA IS STILL A COUNTRY IN WHICH RFE IS THE PRINCIPAL

SOURCE OF NEWS IN THE WESTERN SENSE, FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO UNADULTERATED INFORMATION HAVE NOT BEEN IN THE LEAST BROADENED BY THE GOR'S INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKINGS. RFE THUS HAS A PARTICULAR, IF NOT A UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING OBJECTIVE, BALANCED REPORTING OF WORLD DEVELOPMENTS AND INCISIVE, OBJECTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTARY ON ROMANIAN AFFAIRS.

3. WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST, RFE CONTINUES TO DO AN IMPRESSIVE JOB. THE CONGENITAL FAILURE OF ROMANIAN MEDIA EVEN TO MENTION MANY SIGNIFICANT EVENTS ABROAD - UNLESS THE EVENTS LEND THEMSELVES TO AN INTERPRETATION THAT SERVES THE PRECONCEPTIONS OF THE STATE ODEOLOGY - LEAVES RFE AN ALMOST UNLIMITED FIELD AS THE PURVEYOR OF FACTUAL INFORMATION AS OPPOSED TO SELECTIVE, SLANTED PROPAGANDA. RFE NOT ONLY REPORTS EVENTS OF WHICH ROMANIANS WOULD OTHERWISE REMAIN VIRTUALLY IGNORANT, BUT IT ALSO PROVIDES THE BACKGROUND AND THE LARGER CONTEXT OF OTHER EVENTS OF WHICH ROMANIANS ARE MADE AWARE BY ONLY THE MOST CRYPTIC AND UNENLIGHTENING NOTICES. A PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN A VACUUM, EFFECTIVELY ISOLATED FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD, ARE OTHERWISE IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE AND EVALUATE INTELLIGENTLY EVEN THOSE EVENTS OF WHICH THEY MAY BE MADE AWARE.

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4. IN OUR VIEW, RFE ENHANCES ITS OWN CREDIBILITY ON THE MORE CONTROVERISIAL ASPECTS OF MANY ISSUES BY ITS USE OF MATERIAL FROM JOURNALS OF WIDE INTERNATIONAL REPUTE AND CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN ISSUES ARE NOT CUT-AND-DRIED AND OFFERING VIEWPOINTS AND INTERPRETATIONS CAN ENHANCE A REPUTATION FOR OBJECTIVITY AND PROVIDE AN ILLUMINATING CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ONE-SIDED STERILITY OF THE LOCAL MEDIA AND THE STIMULATING VARIETY OF A FREE PRESS.

5. WHEN IT COMES TO RFE'S COVERAGE OF INTERNAL ROMANIAN AFFAIRS, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE ROMANIAN SERVICE PROVIDES AN ESSENTIAL COUNTERFORCE TO THE OFFICIAL MEDIA'S ROLE AS UNCRITICAL SPOKESMAN AND PROTAGONIST FOR ANY AND ALL GOR POLICIES. RFE PROVIDES A SIMILAR SERVICE IN REPORTING EMBARRASSING DEVELOPMENTS THAT THE INTERNAL MEDIA TREAT AS NON-EVENTS UNTIL THEY ARE PROVIDED WITH A SUITABLY SANITIZED OFFICIAL STORY - USUALLY WELL AFTER THE FACT. IN THIS CONTEXT, RFE MUST BE CONGRATULATED ON ITS TREMENDOUS SUCCESS IN BUILDING A SOLID MASS LISTERNERSHIP, WHICH EARNS IT THE ENVIABLE ROLE OF "LOYAL OPPOSITION" IN ITS PERSISTENT CRITICISM OF THE REGIME'S BLUNDERS AND INSENSITIVITIES AND ITS STEADY ADVOCACY OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

6. THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE ROMANIAN SERVICE'S COVERAGE OF BONA FIDE DISSIDENCE IN OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AS WELL AS ITS PROPAGATION OF WESTERN (PRIMARILY US) SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE MADE IT THE PRIME INSPIRATION

AND PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN FOR THOSE WHO WOULD ARTICULATE THEIR FRUSTRATIONS WITH A SYSTEM THEY FIND UNJUST AND STULTIFYING. AT THE TIME, IT ALSO SEEMS TRUE TO US THAT THE STATION'S HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE RIGHT OF EMIGRATION IN THE HELSINKI CONTEXT HAS PROMOTED THE PHENOMENON THAT SO DISILLUSIONED PAUL GOMA - THE INCLINATION TO ESCAPE. RATHER THAN TO STAY AND OPPOSE, INJUSTICE. ENCOURAGING DISSIDENCE PURELY FOR EMIGRATION GOALS IS THUS UNNECESSARILY LIMITING; THE DEFACTO EFFECT IS TO SECURE FOR A FEW INDIVIDUALS THE RIGHT TO LIVE
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WHERE THEY CHOOSE, BUT THEREBY TO DETRACT FROM THE BROADER CAMPAIGN FOR ALL HUMAN RIGHTS - INCLUDING THE RIGHTS TO LIVE DECENTLY AND TO ENJOY FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN ONE'S OWN COUNTRY - THAT WOULD BENEFIT THE POPULACE AS A WHOLE.

7. THE WHOLE HISTORY OF THE ROMANIAN SERVICE, THE VERY SUCCESS OF ILL CURRENT EFFORT ON BEHALF OF WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS AND ITS UNPARALLELED LISTENERSHIP (AS WELL, WE THINK, AS OUR WORK HERE), DEMONSTRATE THAT THE GOR IS NOT IMMUNE TO PUBLIC OPINION AND IS RESPONSIVE TO JUDICIOUS PRESSURE AND QUIET DIPLOMACY. BEHIND THE FACADE OF RHETORIC, WE DETECT SIGNS THAT THE REGIME SENSES THE GROWING POPULAR FRUSTRATION AND FRAYING PATIENCE. AS WE SEE IT, THE CURRENT SITUATION MAY PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD ON THE SOLID EXISTING BASE TO MOVE THE GOR OVER TIME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, TOWARD INTERNAL COMPROMISE RATHER THAN JUST MORE REPRESSION. THE CRITICAL, COMBATIVE TRADITIONAL STANCE OF RFE AND A BROAD EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS THAT ENCOURAGES POPULAR EXPRESSIONS OF DISSENT ARE NECESSARY ELEMENTS OF THE EFFORT, BUT THEY DO NOT EXHAUST THE POSSIBILITIES OR EVEN PRHAPS - GIVEN THE POWER POSITION IT OBVIOUSLY ENJOYS - THE STATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES. THE ROMANIAN SERVICE IS THE BEST JUDGE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS TO EXPLOIT TOOLS AT ITS DISPOSAL, BUT SEVERAL IDEAS COME TO MIND.

8. TEMPERANCE IN REFERENCES TO THE CEAUSESCUS IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF ANY OPTIMAL APPROACH, AND WE HAVE NOTED THE INSTANCES IN WHICH THE EDITORS HAVE EXCISED INAPPROPRIATE, DERISIVE COMMENTS ABOUT ONE OR THE OTHER. THE ROMANIAN LISTENER IS WELL AWARE OF THE FOIBLES AND VANITIES OF THIS ALREADY UNPOPULAR COUPLE, WHEREAS BOTH HE AND WE ALSO REALIZE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE ARE POWERFUL AND VINDICTIVE. INTEMPERATE OR PETTY PERSONAL ATTACKS AGAINST THEM CAN BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, EITHER BY DIRECTLY PROVOKING THEIR OWN MEANER INSTINCTS OR BY
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ENCOURAGING THOSE IN THE PARTY BUREAUCRACY TO CATER TO THEM. WITHOUT IN ANY MANNER SUGGESTING THAT VALID CRITICISM BE FORESWORN, WE DO SUGGEST THAT SOMETIMES SUCH CRITICISM MAY ALSO PLAY UNNECESSARILY TO CEAUSSCU'S VANITY AND SELF-IMAGE AS THE

PEOPLE'S LEADER.

9. IN ADDITION TO THE VERY VALID CRITICISM OF THE DOGMATISM AND RESTRICTIVENESS OF THE GOR'S INTERNAL POLICIES, THERE SHOULD BE CONTINUING EMPHASIS, WE BELIEVE, ON ITS FLEXIBLE, PRAGMATIC FOREIGN POLICY. PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR POLICIES OF WHICH THE GOR IS JUSTLY PROUD, WHILE CONTRASTING THE BENEFITS ACCRUING FROM THE APPROACH TO EXTERNAL RELATIONS WITH THE SHORTCOMINGS RESULTING FROM INTERNAL RIGIDITIES (THE SEPTEMBER 13 PROGRAM, "LIBERAL ASPECTS OF CEAUSESCU'S POLICY"), CREATES A CONSTRUCTIVE BALANCE IN PROGRAMMING. IT IS THE ANOMALOUS CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE GOR'S APPROACH TO EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND ITS APPROACH TO INTERNAL AFFAIRS THAT PLACES IT IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE IN THE CONTEXT OF CSCE, AND EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE BELGRADE MEETING RAISES THE QUESTION THAT RFE SHOULD CONSTANTLY BE KEEPING BEFORE ITS LISTENERS: WHY SHOULD THIS BE SO?

10. ANOTHER APPROACH TO THIS SAME QUESTION WOULD BE INCREASED COVERAGE OF LESS AUTHORITARIAN, MORE LIBERAL PRACTICES IN OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. NOT ONLY WOULD THIS SHOW THAT INTERNAL FLEXIBILITY CAN ACHIEVE MANY OF THE SAME BENEFITS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS AS DOES A FLEXIBLE FOREIGN POLICY, BUT IT WOULD ALSO HELP DEMOLISH THE MYTH THAT ONE PRECLUDES THE OTHER. SARCASTIC TREATMENT (SUCH AS "GLIMPSES OF EVERYDAY LIFE" OF AUGUST 29) OF THE VICISSITUDES AND FRUSTRATIONS OF LIFE WITH WHICH THE ROMANIAN LISTENER IS ALL TOO FAMILIAR SEEMS TO US LESS EFFECTIVE A MEANS OF ENCOURAGING THE ROMANIAN POPULACE TO DEMAND MORE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT FOR THEMSELVES THAN WOULD BE A CONTRAST OF THEIR RELATIVELY MEAGRE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER THE REGIME'S PRESENT POLICIES WITH THE MORE FAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOME OF THE OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN PEOPLES. IT IS FAR MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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REALISTIC TO CONVINCE ROMANIANS THAT THEY COULD AND SHOULD BE BETTER OFF EVEN UNDER A SOCIALIST REGIME THAN IT IS TO HAMMER THE THEME THAT THEIR PROBLEMS ARE UNIQUE TO, OR INHERENT AND WHOLLY UNRESOLVABLE IN, A SOCIALIST SYSTEM.

11. RELATED TO THIS, WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE IN ROMANIA GROUPS WHICH AT THIS POINT ARE FED UP WITH THE INEFFICIENCY, STUPIDITY, AND WASTE THAT ARE INHERENT IN THE EXTREME CENTRALIZATION AND BUREAUCRATIZATION OF THE PRESENT. THE NEW INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE NEW URBAN WORKING CLASS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE INTERESTED IN ABOLISHING THE SYSTEM THAT HAS GIVEN THEM MUCH OF WHAT THEY HAVE SO FAR ATTAINED, BUT A LARGE PART OF BOTH GROUPS IS DEMONSTRABLY SENSITIVE TO BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES AND TO BUREAUCRATIC WOODENHEADEDNESS AND SHOULD BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO AN APPROACH THAT ENCOURAGES THEM TO STRIVE FIRST OF ALL FOR A CHANGE IN THE QUALITY OF THE REGIME.

12. WE RECOGNIZE THE FUNDING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITS UNDER

WHICH RFE WORKS, AND THE CONSTRAINTS ON RFE - IN PERSONNEL
TERMS - WHEN IT COMES TO TARGETING THE FULL SPECTRUM OF ITS
LISTENERSHIP AS INTENSIVELY AS IT WOULD WISH. IN THIS SITUA-
TION, WE BELIEVE THAT IT COULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF COST AND
POLICY TO IDENTIFY AND GIVE PRIORITY OF FOCUS TO THOSE TARGET GROUPS
THAT ARE MOST LIKELY TO SEE THEMSELVES IN A POSITION TO DEMAND CHANGE
S

THAT ARE LUCIDLY AND COGENTLY IDENTIFIED WITH THEIR OWN NEEDS
AND DESIRES FOR INTELLECTUAL AND MATERIAL SELF-FULFILLMENT.
WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH GROUPS ARE THOSE WHO, WHILE THEY MAY
HAVE A CLEAR STAKE IN THE PRESENT REGIME, ARE DETERRED BY
THEIR FEAR OF CEAUSESCU AND HIS CLIENTELES FROM MAKING THE
INITIATIVES FOR CHANGE WHICH THEIR OWN POSITIONS IN, AND
COMMITMENT TO, THE SYSTEM DEMAND. PERHAPS THESE SAME GROUPS
ALSO ARE EMBRYONICALLY SENSITIVE TO ISSUES OF INDIVIDUAL
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FREEDOM AND FREE-EXPRESSION, IF ONLY BECAUSE OF THE INTRINSIC
CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE ISSUES AND THE ABILITY TO SATISFY
THEIR OWN PERSONAL NEEDS IN PROFESSIONAL OR MATERIAL TERMS.
THESE ARE THE GROUPS THAT NEED CONTINUOUS ENCOURAGEMENT TO
TURN NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS INTO POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORTS;
AND, WITHOUT ENTERING INTO DEFINITIONAL AND THEORETICAL ARGU-
MENTS ON THE LIMITS OF POPULATION CATEGORIES, THEIR PLACE IN
THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SYSTEM AND OUR CAPACITY FOR PINPOINT
TARGETING (SINCE THE ISSUE IS BROAD DIRECTIONS, STRATEGY
RATHER THAN TACTICS) WE STILL BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE
TO AGREE THAT THE MAIN TARGET GROUPS SHOULD BE THE EDUCATED
MANGERS AND THE URBAN WORKING CLASS. SIMONS UNQUOTE.
CHRISTOPHER

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